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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sanborn to Examine Grandparent Visitation Rights

Lawmaker wants revision of state law following court decision

LANSING – Michigan’s laws should strike a balance between the fundamental rights of parents to make decisions relating to their children and the rights of grandparents to be involved in the lives of their grandchildren, said state Sen. Alan Sanborn, announcing on Monday his intention to look at possible changes to state law on visitation rights.

“There is no question that the custodial parent(s) should have input into the decision of whether or not to allow continued relationships between current and former family members in a divorce situation,” Sanborn said. “However, the courts should also have the ability to allow the continuation of family relationships that are in the best interest of the child. There must be a balance.”

A recent decision by the Michigan Supreme Court struck down the state’s law (MCL 722.27b) allowing grandparents to ask a court to compel visitation, as long as the court deems the visitation is in the best interests of the child. The law was invalidated because it did not accord deference to a parent’s decision against such visitation.

“In many instances, grandparents provide an emotional safety net for their grandchildren, as well as give them additional sources of supervision and support,” Sanborn said. “We have to find a way to achieve a balance that maximizes benefit for the children.”

Sanborn said he will be working on legislation to address the Supreme Courts concerns with the existing statute over the summer, and hopes to have it ready for introduction in the fall.